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Fertility in South Korea – from past to present

Introduction

The lifestyle of a Korean family has changed considerably over the past few decades. First of all, the trends in women's fertility-related choices have changed. Contemporary Korean women postpone the decision to have their first child. More and more often they opt for childlessness in order to focus on their educational development and professional career. Contemporary Korean women do not always have plans related to marriage or having children. They know that after getting married they will be under the authority of their husband and his family, and that they will have to resign from further education and career in order to take care of the house, husband, and children. However, a growing number of contemporary Korean women are inclined to pursue their professional careers while not resigning from taking care of the house and raising children (see: Eun Ki-Soo 2010.04.06, koreaherald.com).

In South Korea the increase in the divorce rate and the drop in the number of marriages can be observed – the same tendencies are observed in demographic patterns in the countries of the Western Europe and in the United States (see: Eurostat).

> Korea has undoubtedly experienced dramatic social changes in a relatively short period of time, and it is still in the midst of rapid change. And these changes have become apparent in family values and attitudes as well… Contemporary Korean society is definitely moving away from conservative family values toward the direction of gender equality and progressive attitudes on various family values

> including marriage and gender roles. But for now, it is still premature to say that Korean family values are no longer traditional or conservative writes Eun Ki-Soo (koreaherald.com, 06.04.2010).

Like in other East Asian countries, families in Korea have been strongly influenced by Confucianism. A key influence of Confucianism is familism, which involves putting family first, respecting parents, continuing patrilineal family relationship, and socioeconomic ties among siblings and relatives. These ideals have been emphasized as family values from the mid-seventeenth century (see: Ok 1989).

Korean society is undergoing the process of westernization, however not in all areas of life. For instance, this process does not apply much to the social attitude to cohabitation or homosexual couples, which is in most cases negative (see: Panelnow 2014; follow: Hwajeong Yoo 2015).

Yet, according to the data from the international survey on the youth values in 2010 and in 2012 conducted by the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, the number of Korean cohabiting couples, whether they be heterosexual or homosexual, is "estimated" to increase in Korea. This shows the growing acceptance of premarital cohabitation as well as homosexuality, although the degree of acceptance is still on a low level (see: Choi Injae et al. 2011; Lim Heejin et al. 2012).

Results of the Statistics Korea social survey, conducted in 2014, show that the attitudes towards marriage and cohabitation are changing. The data suggest that priorities and values are shifting in postindustrial South Korean society. Interestingly, according to a Dong-a Ilbo report on the data, 46.6% of the respondents agree that "*a man and woman can live together even if they aren't married*." Even though more than 50% of all the respondents disagreed (53.4%), over half of cohorts in their 20s and 30s either "completely" or "somewhat" agreed that cohabitation is acceptable (61.4% and 62.8%, respectively). Given the conservative nature of the South Korean society, these findings are significant (Denney 2015.02.27, thediplomat.com).

The above-described changes point to a slow dissolution of Confucian values that for centuries have been strongly embedded in the Korean society.

> Korean families have been changing more than in any other period in Korean history writes S. Ok in "A study on familism in contemporary Korean families" (1989).

Rapid Fertility decline in South Korea

The concept of the contemporary Korean family dates back to the 1960s, a period of transformation that affected the economic and political spheres, as

well as cultural patterns and legal affairs. From the end of World War II until the 1960s, Korea experienced great social and economic difficulties such as the Korean War. After the 1960s, Korea began to industrialize rapidly, while also becoming more urban, and since then the Korean economy has grown faster than at any other time in its history. During these periods, the government made industrialization its top priority. This process brought about urbanization and changes in family type as nuclear families started prevailing. As a result, the average household changed dramatically, especially the relationships among family members (Chung 2003).

The tremendous demographic changes, as well as changes in the family makeup itself, make it very hard to grasp the characteristics of the contemporary Korean family. Korea's traditional culture, including its religious heritage, was seriously undermined during Japan's colonial rule of Korea (1910–45) and during the Korean War (1950–53). To complicate the situation even more, since the 1960s, within a lifetime of a single generation, Korea has been transformed from an agrarian to an industrialized urban society. The adoption of not only Western science and technology, but also Western culture, has played a decisive role in bringing this transformation about. Swept into the country on the tides of westernization, industrialization, and economic development, Protestantism has taken root and expanded its reach (see: Park, Cho 1995). All of these societal forces have transformed the traditional value system and demographic characteristics of Korean families.

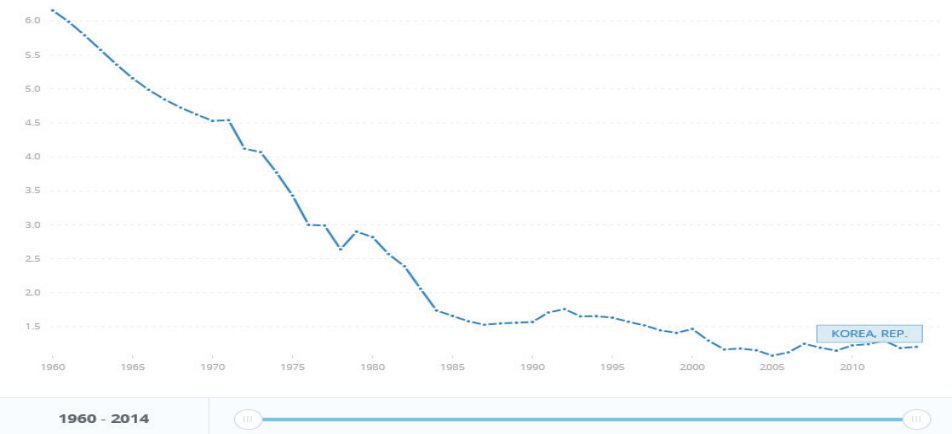
According to vital statistics data available online at Korean Statistical Information Service (KOSIS: kosis.kr), the Total fertility rate in South Korea was around 6.0 until the 1960s – it was so high that in 1962 a national family planning program was launched as an integral part of national economic planning. The major goals of the program were to reduce the level of unwanted fertility, while at the same time reduce the desirable number of children to three or fewer. Korea's family planning programs played a major role in the fertility decline and constituted the principal means of implementing the government's population policies. In the early 1960s, the average ideal – desired – number of children reported by women was four and the TFR was about six. Most women had more children than the number they considered ideal (see: Kim 2005: 2–25). Obviously, the economic and social development made the job of reducing ideal family size easier, in as much as development creates an environment favorable to small-family values and norms. The family planning program both legitimized the idea of family limitation within marriage, and provided easy and affordable access to contraception (Choe, Retherford 2009: 271).

As a result of Korea's family planning program implementation a rapid decrease in fertility was observed. The total fertility dropped below the replacement level (2.1) in 1983, and has continued declining ever since (KOSIS: kosis.kr).

Because of declining fertility the Korean government eventually abolished the long-lasting anti-natalist policy in 1996 and shifted to a pro-natalist policy in response to the fertility decline and population ageing, but these policy efforts do not yet appear to have brought much effect (see: Lee 2009: 57–70).

The lowest fertility rate in South Korea was observed in 2005 and was 1,08. Vital Statistics show that TFR increased somewhat after 2005, from 1,08 in 2005 to 1,13 in 2006 and 1,26 in 2007. Minja Kim Choe and Robert D. Retherford (2009: 284) argue that the increase seems largely due to an increase in the number of first marriages in 2006 and births to those marriages in 2007. In the period from 2007 to 2009 a decline in fertility rate was observed. Vital statistics show that TFR increased once more after 2009, from 1,15 to 1,23 in 2010, 1,25 in 2011 and 1,3 in 2012. In 2013 TFR decreased to 1,19 and after that fertility slowly increased to 1,25 in 2015. Despite the periods of increase, the Total fertility rate in South Korea is still in no replacement level (The World Bank 2015 KOSIS: kosis.kr) (see: Figure 1, Figure 2).

Figure 1. Fertility in the period from 1960 to 2014 in South Korea

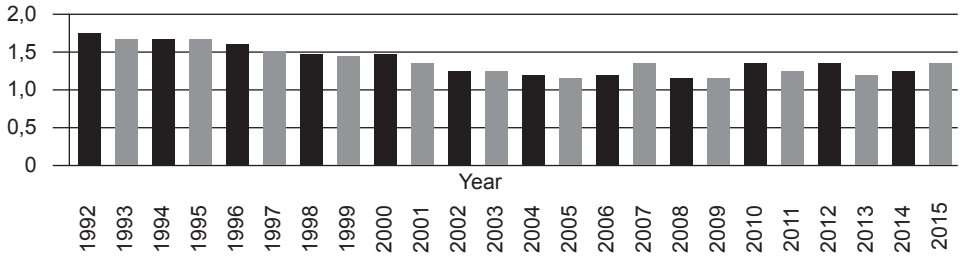


Source: The World Bank, http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN?end=2014&locations=KR&start=1960, 29.06.2016

Many authors (Yoo 2014; Jones et al. 2009; Kohler, Ortega 2002) point out that in South Korea the Total fertility rate (TFR) is very low. What is more, they emphasize the fact that South Korea is one of the ultra-low-fertility countries in Asia.

South Korea joined the group of nations with lowest fertility in 2001, as a result of a rapid fertility decline that began 40 years earlier (Choe, Retherford 2009: 267; Kye 2012).

Figure 2. Fertility rate in South Korea in the period from 1992 to 2015



Source: Data from Korean Statistical Information Service (KOSIS), http://kosis.kr/eng/statisticsList/statisticsList_01List.jsp?vwcd=MT_ETITLE&parmTabId=M_01_01#SubCont, 10.06.2016

East Asian countries, such as Hong Kong SAR, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore have also experienced low fertility since the late 1970s and 1980s, and TFRs further declined below 1,3 between 2001 and 2005 (Jones et al. 2009).

According to Gavin Jones, Paulin Tay Straughan, and Angelique Chan in "*Ultra-low Fertility in Pacific Asia. Trends, causes and policy issues*" (2009) there are three groups of countries where the situation caused by the fertility rate differs:

> There is now an interesting mix of situations in the world: in some countries, lowered fertility is arguably crucial to sustainability and the well-being of populations; in others, increased fertility is arguably equally critical to future wellbeing; in others, a laissez-faire approach to fertility seems justified. In the first two groups of countries, the issue of whether, and if so how, governments should become involved in matters that are frequently argued to be private and confined to the bedroom continues to exercise the minds of government planners. The second group – countries needing to increase fertility – includes countries such as Japan, South Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan. Over the past five years or so, fertility in the first four of these countries has fallen to levels below those of almost all countries in Europe.

Fertility can decline markedly without a decline in pronatal ideology or in the number of children desired or considered ideal. People may still want as many children as before, but economic factors, gender ideology, lack of institutional support for parenting, and other factors may greatly reduce the influencing force of pronatal ideology (Yang, Rosenblatt 2008: 573).

It is very important to point out that the ultra-low fertility in East Asia is different than its European counterpart in that it does not rule out the potential for further declines (Jones et al. 2009). As Chung Eun-hee of the Korea Family Culture Institute remarks:

> This is clearly a transition period for us, change between traditional values and new ideas that industrial development has brought in families. In Western countries, it took a much longer time for the transition to take place, but Korea

has experienced this great change in such a short period that it has caused much confusion (koreatimes.co.kr, 20.06.2016).

Two stages of fertility transition in South Korea

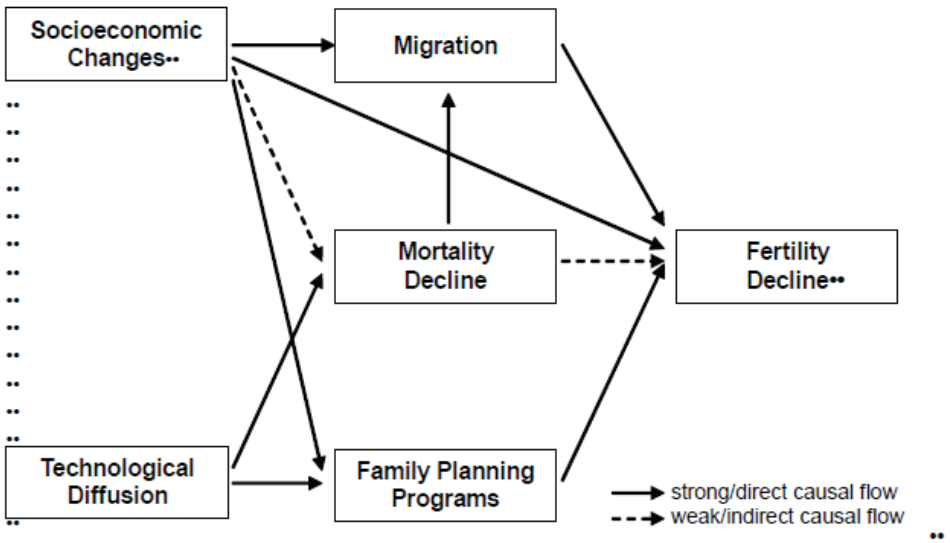
Two stages can be distinguished in the Korean fertility transition: the First Fertility Transition lasting from 1960 to 1985 and the Second Fertility Transition, from 1985 to the present (Doo-Sub Kim 2005: 5).

A profound shift in values and attitudes regarding marriage, lifestyle choice, parenthood, and gender revolution are the driving forces behind the dramatic changes in the fertility-related behavior of Koreans (Doo-Sub Kim 2005: 4).

Doo-Sub Kim writes (2005: 20):

> The first fertility transition was explained as a function of five factors: socioeconomic changes, technological diffusion, migration, mortality decline and family planning programs. It is widely accepted that the first fertility transition was a joint product of socioeconomic changes and family planning programs. Although the decline in mortality precedes the decline in fertility, it appears that mortality did not play a major role in triggering the onset on the first fertility transition. It was found that Koreans responded to population pressure by migrating, delaying marriage, and having abortion, and then, only when these options were exhausted did marital fertility sharply decline since the early 1960s. (see: Figure 3).

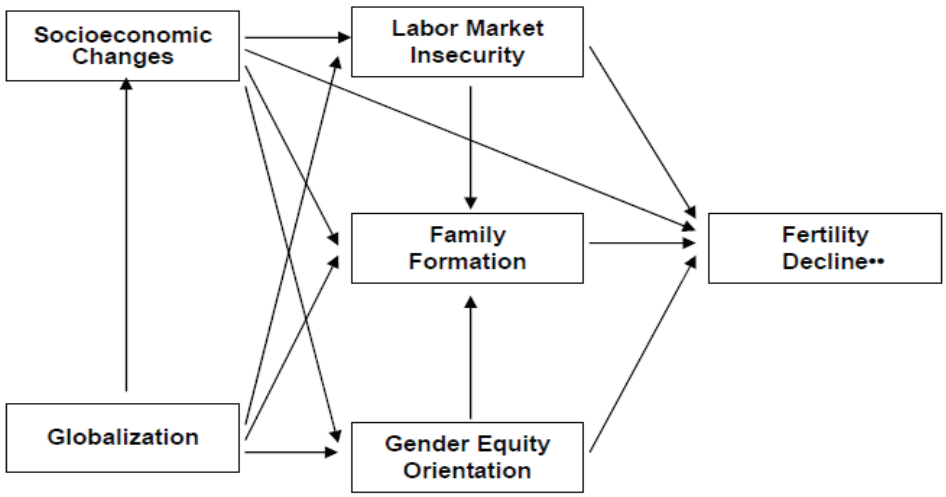
Figure 3. Causal Mechanism of the First Fertility Transition in Korea



Source: Kim, 2004

In the Figure 4, Causal Mechanism of the Second Fertility Transition, the recent rapid fertility decline in the 1980s is a joint product of three factors: an unfavorable labor market resulting from a poor economy, change in timing and magnitude of family formation and gender equity orientation. If one was to highlight a prominent factor from amongst the exogenous determinants of the fertility decline in Korea it would certainly be the socioeconomic changes. Without a doubt, socioeconomic change is one of the crucial preconditions and underlying forces in fertility decline (Kim 2005: 10–12).

Figure 4. Causal Mechanism of the Second Fertility Transition in Korea



Source: Kim, 2004

The mid-1980s can be recorded as an important turning point in the history of Korean demography. Korea witnessed a continued decline in the level of fertility, even though a slight upturn was noticed in the early 1990s. Since then, the fertility transition continued to accelerate. Despite the traditional cultural factors such as preference for male progeny, rapid industrialization, and urbanization reinforced the now common desire for establishing small families(Kwon and Kim 2002; follow: Kim 2005: 9).

In a very precise way demographic transition in Korea and related factors are described by Doo-Sub Kim (2004). Table 1 presents a brief review of the history of the Korean demographic transition. The stages of transition in Korea and related factors such as: period, population growth, fertility, mortality, international migration, and political and socioeconomic factors are described. According to Table 1, created by Doo-Sub Kim (2004), the First Fertility Transition was affected by many political and socioeconomic factors, such as: modernization, economic development, urbanization, and family planning programs. The Second Fertility Transition which has resulted in an under replacement level was

Table 1. Demographic transition and related factors in Korea

Stage	Period	Population Growth	Feritility	Mortality	International Migration	Political and Socioeconomic Factors
Traditional stage	–1910	Very low and stable increase	High	High with fluctuation	Negligible	Typical agrarian society/ Mortality fluctuated due to famine, epidemics and war
Early transitional stage	1910–1945	Rapid increase	High	Mortality transmition	Massive emigration of farmers to Manchuria and Japan	Japanese colonial rule/ Introduction of medical facilities and medicine
Chaotic stage	1945–1960	Rapid increase except for the period 1949–1955	High	Medium but high mortality from 1949–1955	Massive influx from Manchuria and Japan/ Refugees from North Korea during the War	Liberation, partition of the country, the Korean War, social turmoil,economic hardship
Late transitional stage	1960–1985	Continued decline in growth rate	First fertility transition	Continued decline	Slight increase in emigration after 1970	Modernization, economic development, urbanization, family planning programs
Post-transitional stage	1985–Present	Futher decline in growth rate with negative growth potential	Second fertility transition to under replacement level	Further substantial decline	Maintained low level	Social development, globalization, expansion of education, changes in lifestyle, gender equity, medical insurance

Source: Kim, 2004

caused mainly by: social development, globalization, growing level of education, changes in lifestyle, gender equity, and medical insurance provision.

Age of women giving birth to first child in South Korea

Marriage composition is also regarded as an important intermediate variable of reproduction in South Korea (Kim 2005: 15).

Cho Sung-ho, an associate research fellow at KIHSA (Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs), pointed out that in the Korean society not marrying means no childbirth. As Cho claims: *In Korea, having a baby out of wedlock is socially not acceptable* (Ock Hyun-ju, koreaherald.com, 27.03.2015).

Table 2. Age of women giving birth to first child in selected years in the period from 1983 to 1995 in South Korea

By age of mother	By birth order	1995	1992	1989	1986	1983
Total	Total	335,416	342,105	301,956	300,431	370,961
	First child	167,985	184,400	168,408	162,902	167,284
Less than 15 years old	Total	4	8	4	3	0
	First child	3	7	3	3	0
15–19 years old	Total	3,421	4,428	4,707	8,962	12,874
	First child	3,039	3,965	4,085	7,485	10,250
20–24 years old	Total	66,312	86,211	88,140	102,398	151,249
	First child	49,997	66,780	65,968	73,578	92,523
25–29 years old	Total	183,598	180,848	164,797	154,966	162,435
	First child	93,743	93,937	84,980	72,545	57,084
30–34 years old	Total	67,045	60,320	38,345	28,204	34,083
	First child	16,647	16,261	11,292	7,695	5,721
35–39 years old	Total	12,950	8,865	4,789	4,405	7,564
	First child	3,685	2,808	1,607	1,155	1,206
40–44 years old	Total	1,538	940	756	992	2,094
	First child	553	351	230	230	312
45–49 years old	Total	119	116	109	252	373
	First child	35	39	28	46	45
50 years old or more	Total	34	74	54	37	116
	First child	9	30	20	4	11
Age unknown	Total	395	295	255	212	173
	First child	274	222	195	161	132

Source: Vital Statistics, Statistics Korea, data available on www.kosis.kr, accessed 30.06.2016. http://kosis.kr/eng/statisticsList/statisticsList_01List.jsp?vwcd=MT_ETITLE&parentId=A#SubContwcd=MT_ETITLE&parentId=A#SubCont

Multiple studies pointed out that the ultra-low fertility in East Asian countries is mainly attributable to delayed marriage and childbearing (Frejka, Sardon 2010: 315–374). In many East Asian countries women's average age at marriage has increased for the past several decades, which is followed by a rise in childbearing age. As of yet universal marriage pattern remains, although it is diminishing, and births out of wedlock are also not yet common in this region.

A decline in natality along with the solid link between marriage and childbearing resulted in ultra-low fertility in East Asia, which is in stark contrast with the European experience characterized by prevalent non-marital births. The combination of late marriage and the remaining universal-marriage pattern implies that a considerable number of births delayed at younger ages may be made up for later in these countries once women eventually do get married. However, it is obscure whether the ultra-low fertility in this region is attributable to the postponement of childbearing to a later age as in European countries or just reflects a pure decline in fertility.

Table 3. Age of women giving birth to first child in selected years in the period from 1997 to 2007 in South Korea

By age of mother	By birth order	2007	2001	2000	1998	1997
Total	Total	239,190	265,434	301,854	301,987	320,853
	First child	128,211	128,128	144,659	150,586	157,256
Less than 15 years old	Total	2	3	5	0	2
	First child	2	3	5	0	2
15–19 years old	Total	1,628	1,852	2,198	2,665	2,807
	First child	1,327	1,625	1,957	2,397	2,485
20–24 years old	Total	15,519	29,391	35,924	46,113	54,033
	First child	12,163	21,492	26,380	34,411	40,255
25–29 years old	Total	90,863	131,868	157,714	166,100	176,487
	First child	61,871	74,293	87,011	90,561	92,439
30–34 years old	Total	99,899	82,340	85,805	69,703	69,896
	First child	24,723	25,098	23,911	18,487	17,370
35–39 years old	Total	27,608	16,341	16,754	15,245	15,540
	First child	8,807	4,528	4,332	3,895	3,918
40–44 years old	Total	3,008	2,443	2,348	1,877	1,825
	First child	971	859	848	651	621
45–49 years old	Total	177	143	144	96	99
	First child	75	51	60	41	45
50 years old or more	Total	20	8	15	15	10
	First child	5	0	4	6	4
Age unknown	Total	466	1,045	947	173	154
	First child	267	179	151	135	117

Source: Vital Statistics, Statistics Korea, data available on www.kosis.kr, 30.06.2016. http://kosis.kr/eng/statisticsList/statisticsList_01List.jsp?vwcd=MT_ETITLE&parentId=A#SubContwcd=MT_ETITLE&parentId=A#SubCont

According to the data from Vital Statistics available via Korean Statistical Information Service (KOSIS: kosis.kr 2015.08.25), in 1983 the women that gave birth to the greatest number of children were between the age of 25 and 29 (162,435) and between the age of 20 and 24 (151,249) – among them the greatest number of women gave birth to their first child at the age of 20–24 (92,523). In the years to follow, the number of first births has started to decline. In 1986, the number of births in this age group was by 1/3 lower than in 1983 (102,398) and it showed a downward trend with each year. With the decline in the lower age group, the number of births increased in the higher age group between the age of 25 and 29 and between the age of 30 and 34. In 1989, 1992 and 1995 the most women gave birth to their first child between the age of 25 and 29 (see: Table 2).

In the years that followed, the fertility trends evolved. Older and older mothers had babies. In 1997, 1998, 2000 and 2001 the women that gave birth to the greatest number of children were between the age of 25 and 29. In the lower age group, between 20 and 24, the birth rate kept decreasing, with a simultaneous increase in births in the age group between 30 and 34. In 2007, the number of births given by women between 25 and 29 (90,863) and between 30 and 34 (99,899) was comparable (see: Table 3).

The years from 2010 to 2014 saw an increase in the births of children given by women between 30 and 34 – it is in this age group that more and more women decide to become mothers. Still, in the age groups between 25 and 29 and between 20 and 24 a continuous decline in the number of newborn babies can be observed (see: Table 4.).

In Asian countries, such as South Korea and Hong Kong, women tend to give birth to their first child aged 29 *and above* writes A. Packham (huffingtonpost.co.uk, 09.03.2016).

The analysis of the fertility trends among women over the years shows that contemporary women in South Korea opt for maternity at an increasingly later age, which is also the case for European women. In some European countries the majority of first births were given by mothers aged in their 30s: Spain (59.4% of births of first children were given by women aged 30–39), Italy (54.1%), Ireland (52.7%) and Greece (51.9%) (see: Eurostat 2015).

The declining number of births in South Korea since the 1960s has resulted in the phenomenon of an ageing society, which means that the increasing number of elderly people is becoming higher than the number of young people (see: Figure 5).

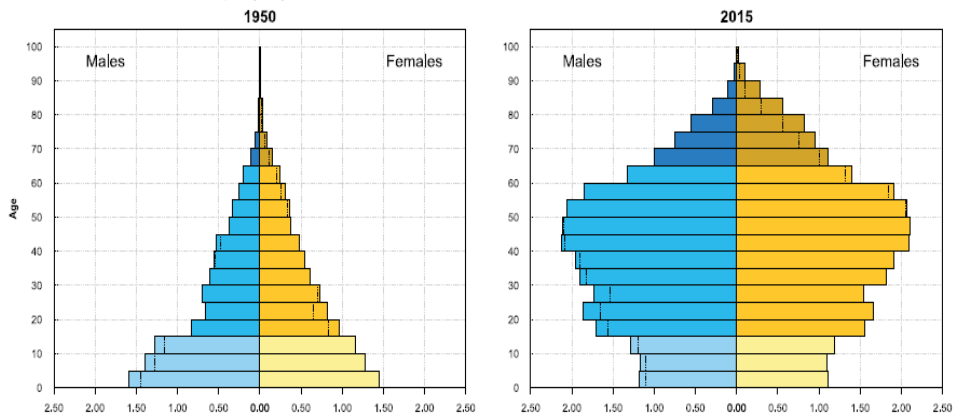
The changes in the trends of fertility in South Korea, which are equally low, as in most Western European countries, do not guarantee the replacement of generations. This situation directly translates to problems with the formation of the family policy.

Table 4. Age of women giving birth to first child in period from 2010 to 2014 in South Korea

By age of mother	By birth order	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010
Total	Total	212,079	212,572	235,592	229,144	227,270
	First child	109,625	109,467	121,225	116,872	114,022
Less than 15 years old	Total	13	13	10	5	15
	First child	12	13	6	4	7
15–19 years old	Total	1,226	1,320	1,404	1,438	1,335
	First child	1,126	1,201	1,250	1,316	1,112
20–24 years old	Total	10,392	10,824	11,973	11,919	11,837
	First child	7,656	8,115	8,848	8,999	8,710
25–29 years old	Total	46,877	50,183	62,184	66,590	71,131
	First child	31,997	34,028	42,263	44,812	46,818
30–34 years old	Total	107,663	107,275	116,049	107,924	103,678
	First child	53,220	52,141	54,969	49,051	45,641
35–39 years old	Total	39,932	37,537	38,258	35,919	34,242
	First child	13,699	12,296	12,073	11,032	10,229
40–44 years old	Total	5,691	5,160	5,455	4,937	4,440
	First child	1,843	1,617	1,733	1,507	1,329
45–49 years old	Total	158	147	210	239	205
	First child	42	48	73	96	87
50 years old or more	Total	12	17	21	39	36
	First child	6	2	8	8	11
Age unknown	Total	145	96	28	134	351
	First child	24	6	2	47	78

Source: Vital Statistics, Statistics Korea, data available on www.kosis.kr, accessed 30.06.2016. http://kosis.kr/eng/statisticsList/statisticsList_01List.jsp?vwcd=MT_ETITLE&parentId=A#SubContwcd=MT_ETITLE&parentId=A#SubCont

Figure 5. Population by age groups and sex in 1950 and 2015 in South Korea (absolute numbers)



Source: World Population Prospects. The 2015 Revision, Volume II: Demographic Profiles, United Nations, New York, 2015, p. 617

South Korea on the cultural map of the world – changing values

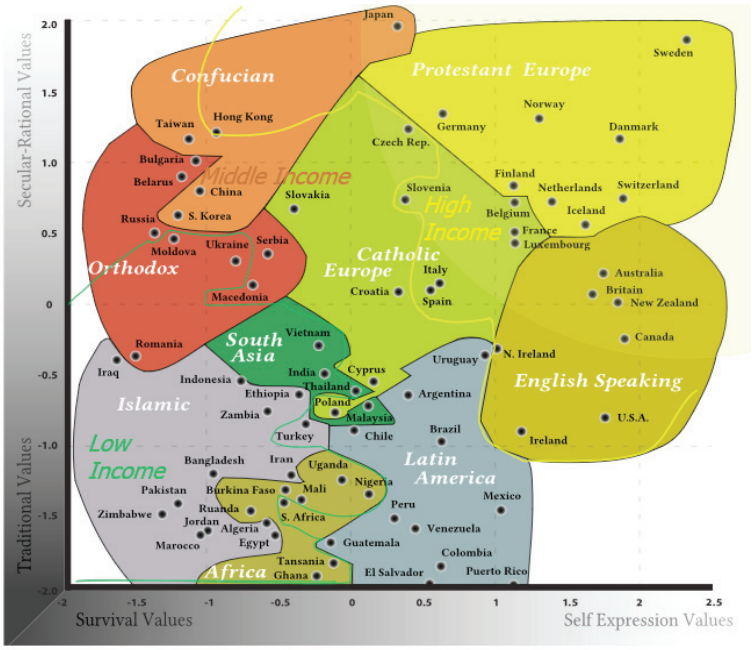
The changes in values and norms acknowledged by the Korean society are reflected in the results of the World Value Survey, on the basis of which the Cultural Map of the World has been created.

The World Value Survey is the largest survey project to analyze values and cultural change worldwide. Wave 5 from 2005–2007 covers 53 countries at very different levels of welfare.

The analysis of WVS data made by political scientists Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel suggests that there are two major dimensions of cross cultural variation in the world (worldvaluessurvey.org):

- Traditional values versus Secular-rational values
- Survival values versus Self-expression values.

Map 1. Cultural map of the world created by political scientists Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel based on the World Values Survey, wave 5 (2005–2008)



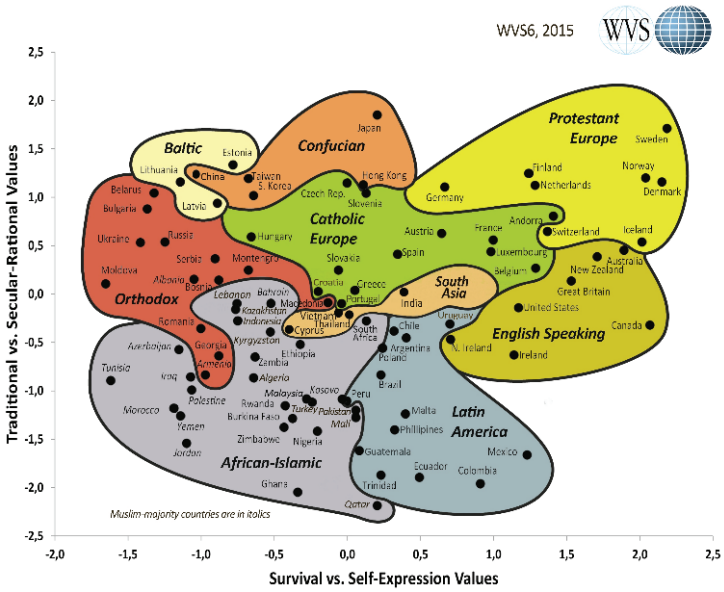
Source: R. Inglehart, Ch. Welzel (2010), Changing Mass Priorities: The Link Between Modernization and Democracy, Perspectives on Politics, June 2010 (vol 8, No. 2), p. 554

The global cultural map (see: Map 1) shows how scores of societies are located within these two dimensions. Moving upward on this map, a shift from Traditional values to Secular-rational is reflected, and moving rightward a shift

from Survival values to Self–expression values can be seen. Traditional values emphasize the importance of religion, parent-child ties, reliance on authority, and traditional family values. People who embrace these values also reject divorce, abortion, euthanasia, and suicide. These societies have high levels of national pride and a nationalistic outlook. Secular-rational values have the opposite preferences to the traditional values. These societies place less emphasis on religion, traditional family values and authority. Divorce, abortion, euthanasia, and suicide are seen as relatively acceptable. (Suicide is not necessarily more common). Survival values place emphasis on economic and physical security. It is linked with a relatively ethnocentric outlook and low levels of trust and tolerance. Self-expression values give high priority to environmental protection, growing tolerance of foreigners, gays and lesbians and gender equality, and rising demands for participation in decision-making in economic and political life (worldvaluessurvey.org).

Each country is positioned according to its people's values rather than its geographical location.

Map 2. Cultural map – World Value Survey, wave 6 (2010–2014)



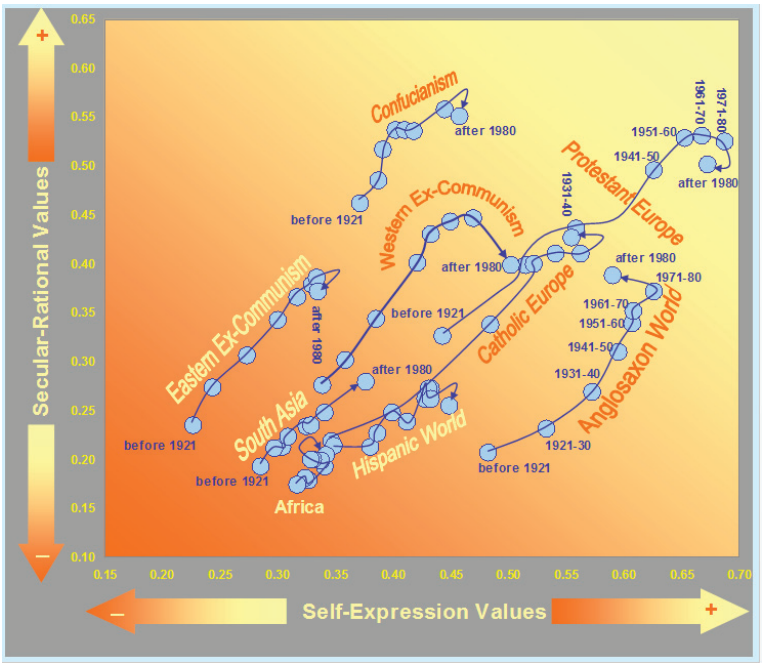
Source: World Value Survey, http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp, 26.06.2016

According to the cultural map (see: Map 1.) created by political scientists Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel based on the World Values Survey (wave 5) South Korea is a country, where in the period from 2005 to 2008 Secular-Rational Values (about 0,6 above 0) and Survival Values (about 1,3 under 0) prevailed. In the period from 2010 to 2014, this situation changed (see: Map 2.). Korean so-

ciety continued moving towards Secular-Rational Values (about 1,0 above 0) and moving away from the Traditional Values (0,5 under 0), which indicates moving towards Self-Expression Values. According to WVS contemporary Korean society puts less emphasis on religion, traditional family values, and authority.

In order to show the dynamics of changes in the values accepted by the Korean society I present below cohort differences that indicate a long-term increase of secular-rational and self-expression values in all cultural zones (see: Map 3.). On Map 3., we can see in which direction and at what pace (measured on the scale) changes in the accepted values by society based on the Confucian philosophy have occurred over the past 50 years (South Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, China), as well as in other countries around the world.

Map 3. Cohort differences indicate a long-term increase of secular-rational and self-expression values in all cultural zones



Source: Ch. Welzel, A Human Development View on Value Change Trends (1981–2006), PDF presentation Istanbul, 03 November 2006 – https://web.archive.org/web/20131019111251/; http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs/articles/folder_published/article_base_83, 26.06.2016

The analysis of the research results carried out in the framework of the World Value Survey shows that South Korean society is moving away from the observance of values based on a tradition that is rooted in Confucian philosophy and moving towards liberal values. The values and social norms recognized by the Koreans are undergoing the process of westernization. Religion, the ties between

a parent and a child, and traditional family values continuously lose importance for the Koreans.

It is worth highlighting that according to Gallop's 2012 Global Index of Religion and Atheism (see: Humanistic Paganism), South Korea boasts the world's fifth-largest population of those who report as "convinced atheists," coming in at 15%. Moreover, nearly half of South Koreans describe themselves as "not religious" or "atheist." The increased number of atheists in South Korea also facilitates the changing of norms and values, which in turn affects family planning.

An increasing number of atheists in South Korea contributes to changes in the recognized values system and has influence on making various life decisions relating to family life, education, and work in accordance with one's convictions.

Conclusion

The greatest influence on such a rapid decrease in fertility was exerted by the National Family Planning Program launched in 1962. The nature of the Korean family was also affected by the Asian Economic Crisis in 1997 (see: Meejung Chin et al. 2014). Demographic statistics quickly reveal these changes in families. In addition, the decreased fertility was caused by many socioeconomic factors such as: industrialization, urbanization, economic development, globalization, labor market insecurity, gender equity orientation but also the shift in values and norms acknowledged by the Koreans (particularly by the young generation).

In the Korean society, reproduction within a married couple is still recognized as the only legitimate form of reproduction. General perceptions about cohabitation still remain largely negative. Children of cohabitating couples, that is, born out of wedlock, are not recognized as legitimate at all. Koreans still firmly believe in the institution of marriage as the only legitimate condition for a man and a woman to live together (Eun Ki-Soo, 2010.04.06; koreaherald.com).

South Korea, along with other industrialized countries with very low birth rates, has come to realize that no single solution is likely to achieve success. A recovery in the Korean birth rate is certainly possible with changes in attitudes to women's roles within the society (and amongst men in particular) along with the establishment of programs and policies by the government and businesses. Korea has clearly made the commitment to do just that (Haub 2010, prb.org).

By way of a conclusion it seems important to turn to a rudimentary issue:

> So, what is a family? What is it to be with a family? Still, people rely on families. They still think a family is the basic unit of society. There is no society without

a family that reproduces its members. Many things will change in the world, but the family's function and importance to reproduce will never change says Chung Eun-hee of the Korea Family Culture Institute (koreatimes.co.kr, 20.06.2016).

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